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ABSTRACT

The report lists competencies for teachers in every day interactions with learning disabled students. Developed by a task force, the competencies are intended to serve as general guidelines. Information is presented on the goal, assessment competencies, and instructional competencies for the following areas: classroom management, spoken language, reading, arithmetic, spelling, writing, and sensory-psycho-motor functioning. It is explained that the competencies are not behavioral statements and must be made operational in relation to a particular school or teacher training program. (CL)

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Competencies for Teachers Who Instruct Children With Learning Disabilities

PROJECT I.O.U.

Maine Department of Educational and Cultural Services

Augusta, Maine

EC151964

Maine's Available Resources: Insuring Optimum Utilization, An I.O.U. to Maine's Children with Learning Disabilities

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INTRODUCTION

The following Task Force report is the result of a one-year study of minimum competencies for classroom teachers who instruct children with learning disabilities.*

The purpose of this report is to delineate to educators and the public the categories of teaching, goals, assessment competencies and instructional competencies which the committee considers essential to successful learning experiences for learning disabled children.

The information in this report should be useful to many agencies or groups. Local school systems will find it useful in planning staff development to meet the needs arising from Chapter 404, Title 20, MRSA. Colleges and universities should find it helpful for developing training programs for teachers. The Department of Educational and Cultural Services can use it as a guide when it advises schools on program development, curriculum planning, and staff development. Finally, classroom teachers will be helped in their quest for self-improvement in coping with the special instructional needs of learning disabled children.

The competencies developed by the Task Force are intended to serve as general guidelines for teachers. They are not behavioral statements and should not be used in their present form as specific criteria for measuring an individual teacher's competency. In order to make these guidelines usable, each competency must be made operational in relation to a particular school or teacher-training program. In other words, the competencies are intended as guides for those who need to specify behavioral objectives for various purposes.

In addition, it must be pointed out that these competencies relate almost exclusively to the skills which are needed for the day-to-day operation of a classroom that includes learning disabled children. They do not cover topics important to increasing the general knowledge of teachers about learning disabilities as a discipline: causes of learning problems, learning and developmental theory, history of the field, relevant philosophical issues, and many others.

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*Learning disabled students are defined as those who exhibit a disorder or demonstrate a discrepancy between expected and actual achievements in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using spoken or written language, such as listening, thinking, talking, reading, writing, spelling or arithmetic. This learning handicap is not primarily the result of sensory, motor, intellectual or emotional handicap, or lack of opportunity to learn.

Competencies have been grouped under seven headings: classroom management, language, reading, mathematics, spelling, writing, and perceptual-motor development. The format followed in each topic includes the goals of the content area, the competencies relating to assessment, and instructional techniques by which these goals may be obtained.

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CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

1. GOAL

The teacher must be able to manage and work with individuals and groups of children to encourage optimal efforts for achievement by student and teacher.

2. ASSESSMENT COMPETENCIES

THE TEACHER SHOULD BE ABLE TO:

a. Identify through formal and informal observation that behavior which is interfering with learning and with enjoyment thereof. This involves the use of techniques such as rating scales, baseline charts, anecdotal records, etc., to accrue specific data regarding the type, frequency, and duration of behaviors which primarily denote personal inattention (daydreaming); or disturbance of another individual (hitting, teasing), of the entire class (singing, yelling) or of the teacher (verbal insults, defiance). This is done by observing and describing the individual and the environment.

b. Assess interpersonal relationships within the classroom through the use of techniques such as sociograms and observations.

c. Conduct and interpret interviews with children in order to learn about their particular strengths, weaknesses, and needs.

d. Conduct self-evaluation in terms of the teacher's effectiveness in interactive behaviors evoked from students during instruction. This may include using tape recorders of student response, by asking fellow teachers to observe, or by asking the consultant to visit the classroom.

3. INSTRUCTIONAL COMPETENCIES

THE TEACHER SHOULD BE ABLE TO:

a. Develop individualized experiences which will permit each student to succeed at the student's particular level of competence.

b. Provide children and the teacher with opportunities to express their feelings. This may be done through conversation, group activity, "magic circle", role playing, or puppetry.

c. Plan and implement programs that may diminish or extinguish children's unacceptable behavior and/or encourage acceptable behavior.

d. Gather data related to the child's (or children's) attitudes, interests, values, affections, etc., and to integrate them into the instructional plans. This involves structuring the learning activities to make them more interesting, rewarding, and meaningful.

e. Plan activities which use peer relationships to promote learning. This may be done by arranging for peer tutoring, and grouping children with similar learning needs by formal group activities with instructional or play media.

f. Recognize the need for reducing teacher comments that are negative, off-task, or overly controlling.

g. Recognize the need for increasing comments that are open-ended, praising and thought provoking.

h. Encourage and provide space and material for independent, cognitive, and affective learning activities, e.g., listening centers, independent reading facilities, and interests centers.

HELLO

SPOKEN LANGUAGE

1. GOAL

The teacher must be able to make screening assessments* of verbal language skills and to make appropriate referrals of children found in need of a diagnostic evaluation by a speech and language clinician.

2. ASSESSMENT COMPETENCIES

THE TEACHER SHOULD BE ABLE TO:

a. Know appropriate referral procedures and resources for those children found in need of a diagnostic evaluation by a speech and language clinician.

b. Have an understanding of the cognitive and affective principles of remedial verbal language programs.

c. Seek the assistance of the speech and language clinician in methods to strengthen recently acquired verbal language skills in the classroom for the learning disabled child who has a diagnosed disorder or deviation in verbal language development.

d. Differentiate syntactic, semantic, and phonological aspects of verbal language in both receptive and expressive modalities.

e. Administer screening tests of syntax, semantics, and phonology in the areas of auditory receptive language and spoken language.

f. Evaluate the outcomes of screening tests of verbal language development and know when the need exists for further assessment and diagnosis by a speech and language clinician.

*Screening assessments/tests, as used here, mean structured or unstructured observations of behavior (evaluated on defined criteria) that will lead one to a Pass - No Pass decision. The Pass decision means: high probability of no language problem. The No Pass decision means: a diagnostic evaluation by a speech and language clinician is indicated since a high probability of a problem exists.

g. Describe appropriate referral resources and procedures for children failing screening tests of verbal language development.

h. Describe quantative and qualitative changes in a child's receptive and/or expressive language behavior with special attention to those linguistic aspects receiving remedial attention.

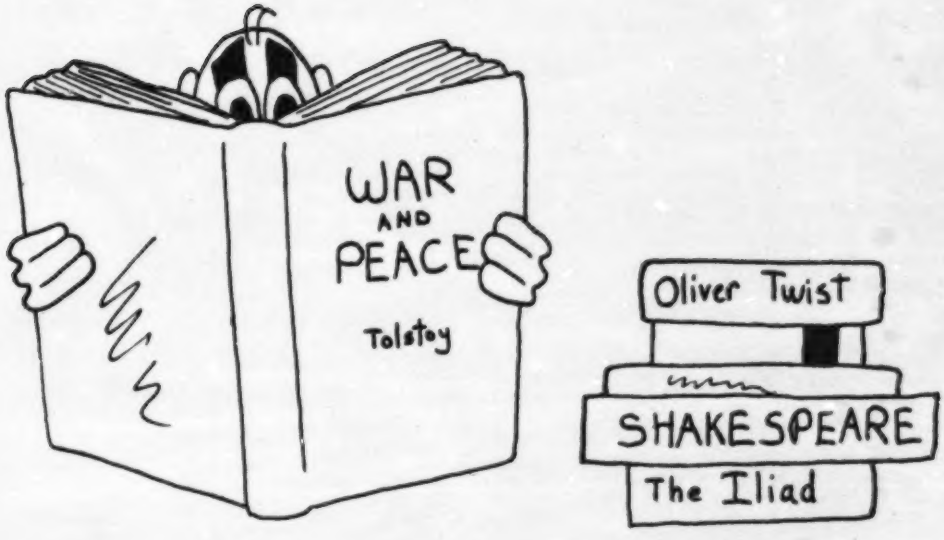
3. INSTRUCTIONAL COMPETENCIES

THE TEACHER SHOULD BE ABLE TO:

a. Identify the positive and negative influence of school experiences on both the cognitive and affective aspects of the child's present level of verbal language development as well as the language changes being developed.

b. Construct, with the classroom teacher and the speech and language clinician, classroom situations for the child to expand and reinforce critical, well-defined language learning experiences.

c. Prepare a descriptive cognitive/affective analysis of a child's receptive and expressive verbal language behavior in school situations.


WAR
AND
PEACE
Tolstoy
Oliver Twist
SHAKESPEARE
The Iliad

READING

1. GOAL

The teacher must be able to organize and implement an individualized reading program based on the major stages of reading progress.

2. ASSESSMENT COMPETENCIES

THE TEACHER SHOULD BE ABLE TO:

a. Demonstrate familiarity with the research and literature related to achievement correlates.

b. Determine through the use of informal and standardized measures of readiness tasks in which a child may be deficient, e.g., receptive and expressive language (see Spoken Language), concept attainment, visual and auditory perception, and general developmental maturity.

c. Establish general reading levels and specific instructional goals through the use of informal reading inventories and standardized tests.

d. Categorize and interpret word recognition errors observed in isolation and in context.

e. Diversify student responses to questions based upon taxomonies (literal, interpretive, and higher order thinking).

f. Use informal and standardized measures of vocabulary development to establish context clues, structural elements, and technical and figurative language.

g. Identify and interpret specific study skill problems through an analysis of informal and standardized test data.

3. INSTRUCTIONAL COMPETENCIES

THE TEACHER SHOULD BE ABLE TO:

a. Match reading activities for each pupil according to instructional needs, incorporating the principles of self-pacing, self-seeking, and self-selection.

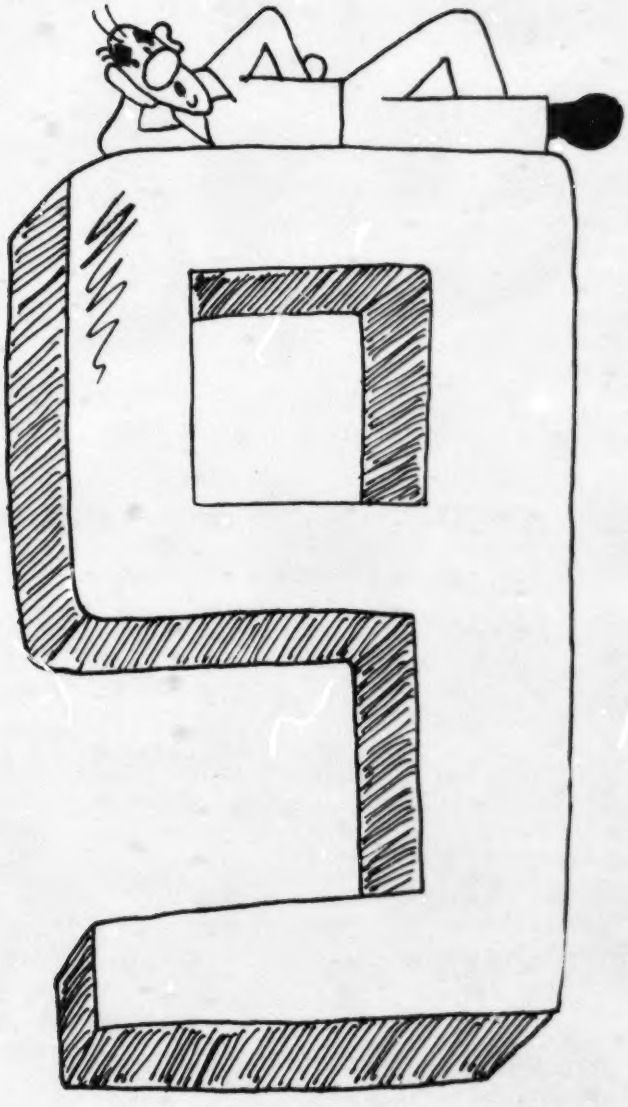
b. Develop a sight vocabulary.

c. Prescribe phonics and structural analysis instruction according to a progressive sequence through the application of visual and auditory perceptual tasks and the use of personalized word lists, language experiences, and other selected exercises.

d. Diversify responses to materials read (literal, interpretive, critical).

e. Foster vocabulary development through experience, word study, and wide reading.

f. Strengthen the program of study skills through application in specific content areas.



ARITHMETIC

1. GOAL

The teacher must be able to assess arithmetic skills informally and formally and must use the information obtained as a basis for planning and implementing a specific instructional program for an individual child.

2. ASSESSMENT COMPETENCIES

THE TEACHER SHOULD BE ABLE TO:

a. Identify through observation and informal methods (oral, written, and/or manipulative tasks) readiness level for spatial relations, discrimination, counting, seriation, grouping of sets, one-to-one correspondence, basic arithmetic vocabulary, etc.

b. Administer and interpret formal assessment instruments.

c. Develop and use informal oral, written and/or manipulative techniques including direct observation, checklists, and criterion tests to assess arithmetic abilities such as calculation and word problem skills (i.e., the ability to identify and solve the arithmetic operations which are presented linguistically in a story problem).

3. INSTRUCTIONAL COMPETENCIES

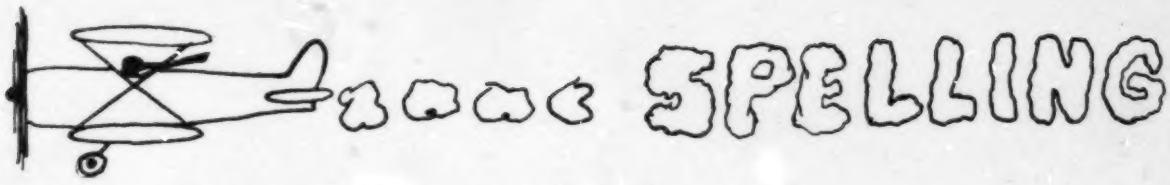
THE TEACHER SHOULD BE ABLE TO:

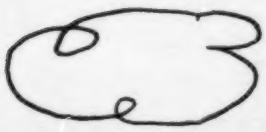
a. Devise and use arithmetic readiness programs incorporating ideas from available texts and from such sources as Piaget, Vallet, Cuisinaire, and Montessori.

b. Use evaluative standardized readiness programs such as Arithmetic Step By Step.

c. Individualize commercially available programs and texts such as those designed for general classroom use.

d. Devise and use informal individual instructional programs in operations such as addition, subtraction, multiplication and division (utilize games, activities, and real-life classroom situations to teach these skills).


SPELLING



SPELLING

1. GOAL

The teacher should be able to assess and plan an individualized spelling program.

2. ASSESSMENT COMPETENCIES

THE TEACHER SHOULD BE ABLE TO:

a. Analyze a child's spelling in terms of visual memory, phonetic regularity and irregularity, correspondence to rules, etc.

3. INSTRUCTIONAL COMPETENCIES

THE TEACHER SHOULD BE ABLE TO:

a. Design a spelling program that uses words from the pupil's reading vocabulary consistent with his particular needs.

b. Provide opportunity for instruction in the use of the dictionary as related to spelling.

WRITING

1. GOAL

The teacher shall be able to use the results of informal assessment procedures to implement a specific instructional program for an individual child in the pre-writing, penmanship, and conceptual writing areas.

2. ASSESSMENT COMPETENCIES

THE TEACHER SHOULD BE ABLE TO:

a. Identify through observation those children who have faulty pre-writing skills such as the inability to hold a pencil, to maintain correct posture, and to copy accurately under different conditions. The teacher should also be able to evaluate reasons why the pupil cannot do the task.

b. Identify the letters which are illegible by examining a sample of his written material and comparing it to that of other pupils and to note the kinds of errors made (e.g., errors of slanting, spacing, failing to close letters, looping unlooped strokes, etc.).

c. Assess a child's written production in terms of its grammatical correctness. This includes evaluating his punctuation, capitalization, word selection, and order, etc.

d. Evaluate the description and inferential qualities of a child's written material. This includes determining the extent to which the ideas make sense and appear in logical order (clarity) as well as the number of ideas presented (breadth) and the level of abstraction represented by the ideas (depth).

3. INSTRUCTIONAL COMPETENCIES

THE TEACHER SHOULD BE ABLE TO:

a. Employ one of the developmental writing programs which are designed for general classroom use. These programs usually include pre-writing components as well as penmanship exercises and cover such skills as legibility and speed of writing.

b. Use special remedial techniques for teaching penmanship and, when necessary, for demonstrating them to regular teachers. These programs are highly individualized and often involve multisensory training.

c. Design and implement an individualized program that stresses correct grammatical usage.

d. Design and implement an individualized program that emphasizes the development and logical sequencing of ideas, i.e., conceptual writing.

SENSORY-PSYCHO-MOTOR FUNCTIONING

1. GOAL

The teacher should be able to identify the sensory-motor developmental sequences underlying learning activities and be aware of the relationships which exist between sensory-motor development and psycho-social development.

2. ASSESSMENT COMPETENCIES

THE TEACHER SHOULD BE ABLE TO:

a. Determine a child's sensory-motor performance capabilities as they relate to selected academic tasks.

b. Determine a child's sensory-motor performance capabilities as they relate to social interaction.

c. Observe the relationships between sensory-motor performance abilities and psychological attributes such as body image and self-concept.

d. Determine gross-motor skill developmental abilities in terms of the basic locomotor patterns.

e. Identify relative strengths and weaknesses in terms of both sensory (receptive) and motor (expressive) modes.

3. INSTRUCTIONAL COMPETENCIES

THE TEACHER SHOULD BE ABLE TO:

a. Develop and use an individually designed sensory-motor program which is task specific and goal oriented (i.e., hand coordination for the improvement of handwriting skills).

b. Develop a series of activities that capitalize on a child's sensory-motor strengths and result in positive feelings toward himself.

c. Design activities that will help alleviate sensory-motor weaknesses in a child.

d. Develop sensory-motor programs that enable the child to develop an appropriate self-concept so that peer relationships can be enhanced.

e. Develop individual sensory-motor programs that are both compensatory and remedial for children with specific physical limitations (e.g., visually handicapped).